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U.S. Navy photo by MC2 Victoria Ochoa

U.S. Strategic Command Chief Talks Deterrence, Partnerships During Latest SGL

By MC2 Victoria Ochoa

The Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) welcomed U.S. Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten, Commander, U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM), for its latest Secretary of the Navy Guest Lecture (SGL), May 18 in King Auditorium. Hyten spoke about the importance of maintaining strategic deterrence and NPS' inclusion into the USSTRATCOM's Academic Alliance.

"When I was growing up, I never ever thought I would become the Commander of Strategic Command ... Strategic Command is the command of legends, and it's hard for me to imagine how I got to this place," said Hyten proudly. "But it happened, and it can happen to anyone in this room."

Hyten shared words of advice to the students congregated in King Auditorium, explaining his thoughts on how he managed to succeed.

"I did the best I could in every job I was assigned, to the best of my capability. I reasoned with myself that if I can carry out that job to the best of my ability, then I can get another one," Hyten said. "I'll tell you that from a professional standpoint, that's a great way to go through your career."

Hyten then transitioned to the topic of nuclear weapons, and their capabilities.

"Over the last 15 years, we've forgotten that nuclear weapons are the most powerful weapons ever built by man, and because of that, we had better know how to operate them on order of the President of the United States to execute the missions that we have to," said Hyten.

"One question that people ask me is, 'Can you imagine a world without nuclear weapons?'

"The answer to that is yes. All you have to do is go back before August 1945 and you would see a world without nuclear weapons," he continued. "So, let's see what a world without nuclear weapons looks like, between 1939 and 1945 in World War II. The world killed between 60 to 80 million people, and if you do the math that's 1 million people a month, 33,000 people a day, being killed in World War II.

"I don't want to go back to that world," Hyten stressed. "The one thing that nuclear weapons have done for this country is they have kept the great power conflict down ... It's not that the conflict disappears, it never disappears, conflict will exist on this earth for as long as humans walk the earth."

Hyten stressed that the conflict would have to be dealt with one way or another, and the only way he could see nuclear weapons disappearing in the future would be if they were replaced with something deadlier.

"I can't even imagine the horror of what that would be like, replacing nuclear weapons with something more powerful," said Hyten. "Nuclear weapons are significant, they're scary but they also help keep the peace on the planet and that is why we have to be critical with everything we do. Don't forget that."

Hyten also emphasized the importance of strategic deterrence and training in preparing for the worst.

"We'll practice for the worst day in American history, because I believe that if we practice and if we're ready, that day will never come," said Hyten. "We will be ready if the day does come and I ask you that whatever line of work you're in, whatever service you come from, whatever nations you come from, each if you should be thinking of strategic deterrence. It is essential to everything we do."

Hyten concluded his presentation to the students with an announcement about USSTRATCOM's Academic Alliance, of which NPS will be the 37th member. Created by Hyten's command, the Academic Alliance is a growing community of interest leveraging expertise and research on the themes of national security, deterrence and assurance.

"In a multi-domain world, how do you actually put those pieces together and talk about strategic deterrence in the 21st century," said Hyten. "We need to be thinking about it, need to be writing about it, and we need to be engaging it ... That's why at Strategic Command we formed the Academic Alliance."

NPS' Secretary of the Navy Guest Lecture program provides a series of professional lectures by senior leaders throughout defense, government, industry and academia designed to help the university's students and faculty link their studies, teaching and research efforts to the defense needs of the nation.

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